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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted at Florida State University's College of Education to determine the status of the instructional aspects of multicultural education and to recommend new directions to insure that multicultural education is adequately addressed in the college's curriculum. The study focused on the extent to which 60 courses addressed sex, race, socioeconomic status, and the handicapped. The rationale for delineating these variables was based on the assumption that, if instruction focused on these topics, it would have a positive effect on all sub-cultural groups. It was found that, within the context of regular instruction, educational implications arising from differences based on sex were treated in all 60 courses. Socioeconomic aspects were given attention in all but one course. Differences related to race were addressed in all but six courses, and the handicapped were considered in 41 courses. Multicultural education was integrated within the regular scope of instruction in the majority of the courses. Lecture and discussion were the most frequently used teaching techniques. The most frequently reported goals of instruction for multicultural education were: (1) strategies for dealing with differences among people; (2) interpersonal skills; (3) evaluative techniques; (4) values clarification; and (5) cultural dynamics. Six recommendations for improving and strengthening the existing multicultural aspects of the program are included in this report. (JD)

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The university provides a unique environment for cross-cultural interaction, a rare educational forum for the interplay of diverse ideas. To promote intercultural understanding the university provides a philosophical atmosphere and concomitant administrative support (human and fiscal) to foster this rich pluralism as one of its major missions. Thus, the university becomes a place where multi-cultural values are respected and multicultural education of the community becomes a universal goal.

At The Florida State University this goal has been a commitment shared by its schools and colleges and translated into action through an administrative support system which facilitates achieving multicultural education. This structure permits a variety of both formal and informal arrangements for addressing the interest and concerns of sub-cultural groups and organizations.

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Through its linkage with the schools and colleges, the university provides a wide array of instructional and informal educational opportunities about cultural groups, minority affairs and pluralism. Courses, in a lecture series, provide students with a rich variety of learning experiences which address various aspects of racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. The pluralist nature of America's schools requires educators to understand and appreciate human differences and to respect the values of all sub-cultural groups. In recognition of this need the University has created majors and content concentrations in the areas of Black Studies, Women's Studies, Cultural Anthropology, American studies, etc.

As part of The Florida State University's College of Education's National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) study, a Committee on Multicultural education was appointed and given two charges:

1. To determine the current status of the instructional aspects of multicultural education in the College (through a questionnaire designed to ascertain viable baseline data);
2. To recommend new or additional directions necessary to insure that multicultural education is adequately addressed in the College's curriculum.

To avoid possible ambiguities in the phrase, "multicultural education," the Committee's Study focused on the extent to which course offerings in the College addressed differences and values of four major subgroups. The primary variables considered were sex, socioeconomic status, race, and the handicapped. The rationale for delineating these variables was based on the assumption that if instruction focused on these variables it would have a positive effect on all sub-cultural groups.

The data accumulated by the Committee was extensive. Sixty (60) courses identified that most sub-cultural groups received some attention within the context of regular instruction. This finding provided substantial evidence that multicultural education is an integral part of the College's teacher education program. A summary of the more salient findings follows:

1. Within the context of regular instruction, educational implications arising from differences based on sex were treated in all sixty courses; socioeconomic aspects were given attention in all but one course; differences related to race were addressed in all but six courses; and the handicapped were given some consideration in 41 courses.
2. Multicultural education was integrated within the regular scope of instruction in the majority of

the courses. Emphasis was placed on the educational implications for learning and subsequent achievement.

3. The most frequently used teaching techniques for delivering instruction in multicultural education were lecture and discussion. Examples of other alternative techniques were hands-on activities, special reading, research papers, skill labs, diaries, and field trips.
4. The most frequently reported goals of instruction related to multicultural education were: (a) strategies for dealing with differences among people; (b) using interpersonal skills; (c) evaluative techniques; (d) value clarification; and (e) cultural dynamics.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Clearly, on the face of the material described in this article, Florida State University--not unlike many of its counterparts across the nation--has a strong commitment to produce and incorporate quality instruction relative to pluralism in its curriculum. Both the cognitive and affective needs of the sub-cultural populations are considered in the development of the curriculum. Care must be taken to insure that this commitment is not "mere lip service". In recognition of this, The Florida State

University has initiated the following action oriented steps:

1. The State Department of Education has recently adopted Florida's 23 Essential Teacher Competencies. One of these competencies addresses multicultural education:

   "Identify and/or demonstrate behaviors which reflect a feeling for the dignity and worth of other people including those from other ethnic, cultural, linguistic and economic groups."

   The University is in the process of making curricular revisions to implement the "spirit and intent" of this competency.

2. The University is continuing to encourage the development of programs designed to create an environment which fosters multicultural education. Much of the knowledge that students now possess about differences among various sub-cultural groups is based on mythological ideas. Not all people within a given subgroup can be "generically packaged." Their beliefs, hopes, dreams, and the need to be recognized as a societal being, while influenced by their culture, are individualistic. The whole of their being constitutes their "humanity".

3. The University is encouraging the development of strategies to integrate knowledge about sub-cultural groups in its programs and courses in order to eliminate negative stereotypes.
4. Faculty are attempting to conceptualize a curricular model for effectively implementing not only the "letter" but also the "spirit" of current legislation dealing with bilingual/ multicultural education.
5. The University is striving to insure that students of one sub-cultural group have many opportunities to interact with peoples from other sub-cultural groups, rather than interacting only with those from the same sub-cultural background. The instructional component must be reinforced by some experiential factors designed to facilitate philosophical and practical growth.
6. The University community is encouraged to recognize that Affirmative Action is only one facet of the multicultural emphasis. Although the University community should continue to give priority to this facet, the emphasis to multicultural education should be broadened to address the other elements included in this article.

In summary, a proactive rather than a reactive position must be adopted if institutions hope to meet the goals of multicultural education. Only then can we make the commitment to pluralism and multicultural values a reality; to become all that we can become, maximizing our greatest national resource, that of human potential.

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(The information included in this article does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Office of Special Education.)